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1. In a data switch including a plurality of interface modules, a method of forwarding a block of data comprising:
receiving a first packet in a first protocol;
translating the first packet into a generic format;
passing the generic packet to an application;
receiving from the application the generic packet;
translating the generic packet into a second protocol; and
sending the translated packet to an output port.

15 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising placing the generic packet into a receiving queue corresponding to a quality of service level of the generic packet.

20 3. The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving at a forwarding queue the generic packet from the application, the forwarding queue corresponding to a quality of service level of the generic packet.

25 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the sending comprises sending the translated packet to a backplane, the packet having a port address within a range reserved for a destination port.

30 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the destination port is selected from a group consisting of known internal unicast ports, known internal multicast ports, known external multicast ports, and dynamic multicast ports.

35 6. A switching system comprising:
an input port receiving a first packet in a first protocol;
an input driver coupled to the input port for translating the first packet into a generic format;
means for passing the generic packet to an application;

means for receiving from the application the generic packet;
an output driver for translating the generic packet into a
5 second protocol; and
an output port coupled to the output driver for transmitting
out the translated packet.

10 7. The switching system of claim 6, wherein the input and
output drivers register with a generic forwarding interface, the
generic forwarding interface being located between the drivers
and the application.

15 8. The switching system of claim 6 further comprising a
receiving queue for receiving the generic packet, the receiving
queue corresponding to a quality of service level of the generic
packet.

20 9. The switching system of claim 6 further comprising a
forwarding queue for receiving the generic packet from the
application, the forwarding queue corresponding to a quality of
service level of the generic packet.

25 10. A switching system comprising:
a plurality of drivers;
a plurality of applications;
a plurality of receiving queues each queue corresponding to
quality of service level; and
the generic forwarding interface located between the
30 plurality of drivers and the plurality of applications, wherein
the generic forwarding interface places a packet from a driver
into a receiving queue corresponding to the quality of service
of the packet.

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11. The switching system of claim 10 wherein the generic forwarding interface takes the packet out of the receiving queue and sends the packet to an application registered for the packet.

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